MONTEREY NEWS

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The Town

by Maggie Leonard

Town Employee Compensation

A very tense Select Board meeting on November 14 (there was no meeting on November 7) was attended by most of the full-time town employees, former members of the Employee Compensation Committee, Finance Committee members, and a sprinkling of concerned citizens, all with strong opinions about the way the Select Board has been handling the employee compensation discussions. There was also dissent within the Select Board, with Scott Jenssen objecting to the Select Board's discussions to date. However, by the next Select Board meeting on Monday, November 21, cooler heads had prevailed and all parties were sitting at the same table again working together constructively. The bluster of the prior Select Board meeting seemed to have gotten everyone on the same page pretty fast, and all parties were ready to move ahead.

After reading about the Select Board's employee compensation discussions in the November *Monterey News*, town employees requested a meeting with the Select Board. At the November 14th meeting, six

Maynard Forbes

The Monterey kindergartners met with success on their trick-or-treating foray to the Monterey Firehouse on Halloween. Firefighter Fred (who's apparently a little tired from being on duty 24/7) was there to hand out the goodies.

of the seven full-time employees attended (Interdepartmental Secretary Melissa Noe, Director of Operations Maynard Forbes, Rich Crittenden and Peter LeProvost of the highway department, and Michael Johnson and Chief Gareth Backhaus of the police department) and provided a written benefits proposal. Among other things, the employees were dismayed that the Employee Compensation Committee (ECC) had been dissolved and that the Select Board had not invited the employees to a seat at the table during the recent discussions. Select Board member Jon Sylbert countered that Select Board meetings are by law open to the public, and everyone is encouraged to attend.

A brief history of the Employee Compensation Committee: The ECC was created by the Select Board in 2006 in an attempt to create a structure and set policy for the regular review of employee compensation and benefit packages. At the first meeting the ECC decided that employee salaries were the most pressing issue and that they would tackle other benefits in upcoming years. In January 2007, the ECC (at that time composed of Michael Storch, Dan Moriarty, Maynard Forbes, Janet Cathcart, and Gareth Backhaus) issued a report that recommended making salaries for full-time employees more competitive with other neighboring towns. The ECC's report stated, "Generally Monterey was in the lower half or lowest in most categories in both cash compensation and benefits." The ECC also characterized the heated debates over salaries at town meeting as "wounding and disappointing to our full-time employees."

Throughout 2007, 2008, and until January 2009, the ECC met several times to discuss health benefits and other insurance options, vacation time and sick time, and cost of living (COLA) issues and also continued to review Monterey salaries and benefits by comparison with other small towns such as Tyringham, New Marlborough, and Otis. The ECC spent most of its time dealing with the urgent tasks of figuring out the actual numbers for the salaries and benefits, and the important (but not urgent) opportunity to create processes and set policies seems to have been lost.

At the November 14th meeting, the town employees requested that the ECC be reconsidered and that the Finance Committee not "float ideas" regarding compensation without having employee representatives present. The open meeting law came into question, and according to the town web site the last available minutes for the Finance Committee are dated 3/25/11.

There was confusion at the meeting about the goal of the employee compensation discussions. Bob Lazzarini asked, "What's the purpose here? Is it to change the compensation package based on expense or to set policy?" Jon Sylbert replied, "We still have not developed any structure or way to develop policies. Unfortunately that never came to fruition, and come January we would just bang out a bunch of numbers without any rhyme or reason. Plus we need to know what other towns are doing." Stan Ross countered, "Why? Monterey is Monterey and we should be dealing with that." Sylbert replied, "Because it's a normal business procedure to perform due diligence when researching employee positions." Muriel Lazzarini stated, "From my experience the caliber of the work force in our town is far above other towns, and I think the benefits proposal they have presented tonight is very professional."

Michael Storch of the Finance Committee agreed that the benefits proposals were well done and said, "As a member of the Finance Committee my first thought is 'How much will it cost?' It needs to be determined if it's affordable. I agree with most of the items on the proposal, but we may not be able to do it all at once; we may need to use a phased-in approach." Maynard Forbes stated, "I proposed the ECC a few years back, and it was the first salary committee that worked. Then someone

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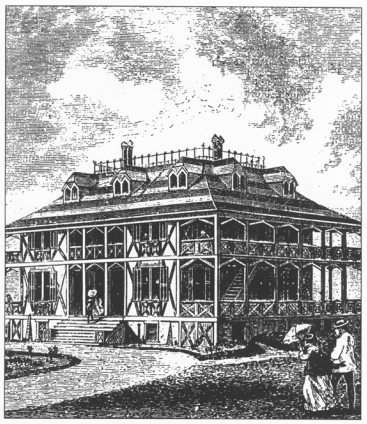

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decided that there was a conflict of interest. Any time you have personnel decisions they are usually crafted by management. The ECC needs to be reinstated. The whole process was stopped. There were no raises last year and the employees found this out in the *Monterey News*, and that was very disrespectful. No one has been talking to us and that has caused hard feelings."

Jon Sylbert tried to explain his position: "This is not about how great the employees are; we know how great they are. This is not about that. We need to establish a procedure and we need the town to vote on it. What we are doing is trying to come up with a system so we don't have these problems. We need to make sure it's not about people, it's about jobs." Muriel Lazzarini commented, "Its about both!" Melissa Noe said, "I'm confused. If you were trying to set up a procedure, then why would you not meet with the constituents? This situation is the way it is because you guys handled it poorly. I thought it was all about procedures, but what you guys are doing is making proposals." Scott Jenssen stated, "I would like to make a motion to keep the 90/10 [health insurance] split. I don't think we should balance the budget on the backs of our employees!"

Throughout the heated discussion Select Board chair Wayne Burkhart seemed undaunted and kept trying to keep order and to see if statements were actual motions. Finally Burkhart interrupted, "Is there a sense of a schedule here? How do we want to move forward?" Sylbert replied, "This is very complicated and if we don't put in the time it won't be good. I recommend that we set aside time at each Select Board meeting to work on this." Burkhart: "Then is it agreed that we make this a part of every meeting? Forty-five minutes beginning at 6?" It was agreed and the employees left.

Glynis Marsh

Repairs under way to River Road, damaged by Hurricane Irene flooding. The road reopened November 22.

November 21 was round two for the Select Board, the Finance Committee consisting of Michael Storch, Stan Ross, and Dan Moriarty, and the town employees' representatives, Maynard Forbes, Gareth Backhaus, and Michael Johnson. Stan Ross began the discussion by stating, "We are here to continue the conversation. I read the benefits proposal that the employees put forth, and I agree with a lot of it. It's a good beginning." Ross went on to review the document point by point. Thus began a constructive discussion regarding employee benefits and compensation that went on well past the forty-five minutes allotted on the agenda. It was a back-to-basics discussion with ideas about what policies might work, ideas about constructive incentives, and projections about what the cost ramifications would be.

On November 28, the Select Board, Director of Operations Maynard Forbes, and Police Chief Gareth Backhaus, plus

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Dan Moriarty of the Finance Committee, were present to keep hammering out ideas and positions on employee compensation. Select Board chair Burkhart initiated the discussion saying, "I would like to keep things as simple as possible." Jon Sylbert agreed: "For instance, regarding the health insurance premiums, it's simpler if the employees and the Board agree to a simple split, as opposed to the proposed apportioning of the increases, 50/50. After a few years that gets really complicated and the employees don't come out ahead."

The group went on to discuss what were termed "menu items," such as on-call stipends for highway and police employees when they have to be ready to go to work outside of their regular hours. One policeman is on-call every night so Monterey has 24/7 coverage, and the highway department is potentially on call from approximately November through March. Other items under discussion were a proposed longevity bonus for employees who have worked for a number of years, typically twelve to fifteen, a proposed clothing allowance for highway department workers, and a provision for employees to work from home on snow days so they would not have to use sick time or vacation time. There was a discussion about whether sick days should accrue over time or the slate should be wiped clean each year, and whether there should be "bankable" sick days to allow unused sick days to accrue for use if needed. During any discussion of sick days the topic of catastrophic illness always comes up, and no one is quite sure about the best way to deal with that. As Jon Sylbert pointed out, "The last time that [a catastrophic illness] happened we had a special town meeting and went to the voters and, of course, it passed." However everyone involved would like to find a more structured way to deal with that situation in the future. Numbers and costs are always tossed around, but since the discussions are ongoing and the numbers can change it was agreed not to formalize them at this time.

Dan Moriarty said that in his opinion many townspeople don't know all the things that employees do for the town. He suggested highlighting accomplishments such as when the Director of Operations gets $500,000 in grants from the state, or recoups $250,000 from FEMA, which results in significant benefits for the town at no additional cost. On the agenda for the next meeting's discussion are salaries and raises and contracts.

Wind Energy Siting

Also at the November 21st Select Board meeting, Monterey residents Laurily Epstein, Holly Montgomery, Eric Montgomery, and Monica Webb approached the Select Board regarding the town's stance on wind energy, specifically with regard to the Wind Energy Siting Reform Act (WESRA). WESRA, which failed to pass in the failed 2009–10 legislative session, has been resubmitted for the 2011–12 session. On the commonwealth's web site (massachusetts.gov) the purpose of WESRA is defined as: "To encourage the development of wind energy generating plants and ancillary facilities by establishing clear siting standards, one-stop permitting at the local and state level, and streamlined appeals of such permits." According to Epstein (and many concerned groups) WESRA is a strong-arm method for the state to site industrial wind turbines anywhere it wants without regard to local zoning regulations or reported health effects. Epstein queried the Board on Monterey's stance on WESRA. Select Board chair Burkhart said that he was not aware of all the details of the bill, but noted that the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission had not been in favor of it. Epstein countered, "Are you saying that Monterey is opposed to the wind siting act that takes away local control?" Jon Sylbert observed that at a recent Massachusetts Municipal Association breakfast towns had been discussing the act and north county

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towns were "tremendously upset that they had little control of the project and received no benefits." Epstein continued, "Would it be possible for the Select Board to write a letter to Senator Downing voicing their concerns?" She added, "The timing is important because Downing is making an announcement with regard to WESRA on December 14th." The Board agreed to work on a letter stating they are not in favor of laws, for alternative energy or otherwise, that bypass local control.

This and That

The damage done by Hurricane Irene flooding to River Road has been repaired, thanks to a federal grant received by Director of Operations Maynard Forbes. And after years, New Marlborough has repaired and reopened the Hatchery Road continuation of River Road, so the road is now open from Route 23 to Hartsville.

The Board received a notice from the Poiriers that they will be moving from the Bally Gally rental on November 30.

The Board sent a memo to the Finance Committee and Town Accountant with the following FY13 suggested budget schedule: 1/3/12, Finance Committee requests should be sent out to all departments and committees; 1/23/12, budget requests due back to Finance Committee; 2/6/12, Finance Committee to present budget requests to Select Board; all of March, review budget requests; finalize the town meeting warrant on 4/2/12; mail the warrant on 4/9/12; host an informational meeting on 4/27/12; and the town meeting will be on 5/5/12.

Wayne Burkhart reported that Monterey will receive $2,828 as our share of the state-wide excess.

Director of Operations Forbes emailed the Select Board that they should approve the petition from National Grid and Verizon to install five jointly owned poles and relocate two jointly owned poles on Tyringham Road. The original pole hearing was continued from February 28, 2011, due to Forbes's safety concerns and had not been rescheduled. Forbes reported that the issues he had have been resolved and no trees are being taken down. The poles will all be located in the right of way and are not near any houses or dwellings. The Board approved the petition.

Dan Moriarty asked the Select Board to support a letter of qualification he is submitting to FEMA's "Increased Cost of Compliance" program. He explained that if you have flooding to your home and the damage is assessed at 50 percent or more of the value of your home, you can qualify for a government grant for repairs. The Select Board felt the Board of Assessors are better qualified to make such a decision and decided to submit the letter to them. Moriarty also reported that there will be a meeting with FEMA at Town Hall at 4 pm on Thursday, December 15. State Senator Ben Downing and State Representative Smitty Pignatelli are expected to attend, along with MEMA manager Pat Carnevale and representatives from New Marlborough. The meeting will be a forum to discuss the flooding on Lake Buel and possible mitigation work.

Correction

Peter Kolodziej, Sanitary Inspector for Monterey, now has no association with Tri-Town Health, as was incorrectly indicated in November's *Monterey News*.

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Cell Tower Special Permits Approved by ZBA

The Zoning Board of Appeals (ZBA) held a third public hearing on November 16 at 2 pm and 3:15 pm to deliberate on two separate applications from AT&T for special permits and requested variances to construct two cell towers: one at 73 Chestnut Hill Road (on the New England Keswick property) and the second at 31 Main Road (near the junction of Rte. 23 and Rte. 57). Propagation studies showed that these towers will cover up to 80 percent of Monterey, with the main corridor of coverage beginning on Route 23 at the town line with Great Barrington, extending east on Route 23 to the town line with Otis, and east on Rte. 57 into New Marlborough. There is a cell tower in West Otis near Route 23 that will continue the signal east.

The usual suspects attended the November 16th hearing with AT&T's lawyer Michael Dolan and his now-familiar phalanx of a radio engineer, site developers, and tower site acquisition guys, plus Chris Tryon of Berkshire Geo-Technologies who worked to improve the drainage plans for the tower access road at 31 Main Road. The other suit in the audience (literally) was the ZBA's expert consultant Richard Comi of Municipal Solutions, a former Director of Network Operations New York Telephone and NYNEX and the former Vice President and COO of Cellular One of Upstate New York. On the other side of the table were ZBA chair Fred Chapman and board members Stan Ross, Jon Levin, Bob Lazzarini, and Cynthia Webber.

The first hearing began at 2 pm with ZBA chair Fred Chapman reminding everyone (as he has prior to each hearing) that the telecommunications bylaw was not yet approved by the Attorney General and that any special permits or variances granted would be subject to possible bylaw changes from the AG's office. In a more recent development, Town Clerk Linda Thorpe reported on November 25 that the AG had approved the telecommunications bylaw with no changes, meaning that the ZBA will not have to contend with making changes either. Chapman added that the board hoped to "resolve the final issues and questions today."

Attorney Dolan took the floor and reported that they had met with the Conservation Commission and received approval for their Storm Water Management Plans both projects. There has also been debate about a monopole versus a monopine—which detractors have dubbed "Frankenpine"—and Dolan indicated that AT&T would be happy to install either style of tower. The Appalachian Trail Conference approved a monopole design and ZBA member Cynthia Webber has contended several times that she would sooner get used to a regular cell tower than a giant fake metal pine tree; many board members agreed with her. Jon Levin thought that a conventional cell tower (monopole) would be okay for the Main Road location but that the Keswick location might benefit from a bit of camouflage (monopine) since it is mostly seen from a distance and is higher on the horizon.

AT&T's radio engineer Francis Malaban reviewed a third series of propagation studies based on assessing the variables that ZBA members had requested showing signal coverage for varying heights for the towers, particularly for the Main Road site, for which a variance from the setback requirements was requested. At prior hearings the ZBA had also requested prop studies for varying tower locations, and they were also following up on a suggestion that a taller tower might have some benefits of additional coverage. Using the propagation studies, Malaban demonstrated that "there would be no significant benefit to making the tower higher" (the proposed height is 160 feet). Malaban presented a computer generated 3-D image of the topography north of the tower showing conclusively that a series of sizeable summits are in the way, most notably Beartown Mountain (3,247 feet) and Mount Wilcox (2,755 feet). Chapman noted that even with a taller tower the propagation studies showed no increase

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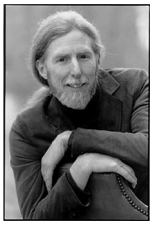

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in coverage to the "white areas" where there is no signal anyway.

In summation, Dolan acknowledged that AT&T's experts answered many questions regarding varying tower heights and locations and stated, "We respectfully request the relief we have outlined in our application." That relief takes three forms: one, a special permit to construct the cell tower; two, a variance for a 60-foot setback from the property line (setback regulations require a tower to be sited 1½ times the height of the tower from the property line, in this case 240 feet); and three, a variance regarding the size of the compound.

The compound area size has been a sticking point due to the bylaws limiting the area to a radius of 25 feet. The industry is simply not able to accommodate those requirements and at the same time adhere to the requirement of co-location of antenna on the towers. Tower antennas require sheds to accommodate the equipment associated with the towers and a generator in the event of loss of electricity. The more antennas on a tower, the more space needed for equipment sheds. A tower that has more than one cell phone carrier located on it requires a larger compound than the bylaw currently allows.

Attorney Dolan stated outright that if the larger compound size was not approved it would effectively prohibit construction of a cell tower. The 25-foot limitation is basically an unforeseen mistake in the bylaw that will have to be remedied by the Planning Board. ZBA member Jon Levin noted there was a difference in the size requested for each tower compound, with the compound at 31 Main Road 50 feet larger than the one at 73 Chestnut Hill and asked if both compounds could be the same size. Ken Curlick of Infinigy Engineering said, "It might be possible tweak a few things to make it slightly smaller, but we need space to accommodate the co-locators." Curlick pointed out that the 31 Main Road location has a taller tower and more room for other carriers, and thus needs a larger compound to house the additional equipment.

Thanks to the efforts of volunteers on the Saturday after Thanksgiving, the Monterey ice skating rink has been assembled. Weather permitting, the rink could be ready for skating by New Years Day. (Photo: Steve Graves)

At a prior hearing on September 26, AT&T had already agreed to provide space on the tower for town emergency personnel at no charge. During the tower-compound-size discussion, ZBA chair Chapman asked if the shelters could be pushed closer together and if one of the shelters was for the town equipment. Curlick replied that they were designed as close together as allowed. Chapman took the opportunity to ask if AT&T would foot the bill for the town's equipment shelter, and there was a long pause. The site acquisition specialist, Randy Howse, said "No," that he had not

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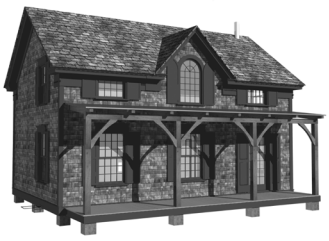

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done that anywhere previously and his client would not agree to it, and attorney Dolan concurred. ZBA member Stan Ross quipped, "Well if you don't ask you don't get!" and the hearing continued.

During the deliberations phase of the hearing Chapman said that the real issue with the 31 Main Road location is the proximity of the 160-foot tower to the property line, necessitating the variance. He noted that there was no opposition from any of the abutters, many of whom had attended prior hearings. Propagation studies demonstrated that not granting the variance would result in a loss of coverage. The cell tower would still be on the hill but the town would get less from it. AT&T demonstrated many times that the optimum location for a cell tower to serve the most people the most reliably was in the location their radio propagation studies had pinpointed. They convinced ZBA members and were granted the setback variance by a vote of four to one with Chapman as the single dissenting vote.

Regarding the issue of allowing a larger compound size Jon Levin said, "It's intuitive that not every application will fit into any given bylaw and that there are times when provisions of a bylaw need to be modified." Levin also noted that both of the compounds are deep in the woods with little in the way of visual repercussions. Bob Lazzarini noted that the bylaw allowance for the tower compound size requirements were so insufficient that the Planning Board would probably be changing those numbers anyway. Chapman mused that if you read the bylaw it could be construed as meaning that each *carrier* could have it's own 25-foot-radius compound. Cynthia Webber suggested that the special permit make conditions that the towers will meet future legal standards, and that the variance regarding compound size be granted. Levin agreed, stating, "We have heard testimony about tower heights and coverage areas. I think we need the greatest coverage and for that we need to grant a variance. Since there has been no testimony to the contrary from abutters I think we should grant." The ZBA unanimously voted to grant AT&T the variance regarding the size of the tower compound. All other requirements being fulfilled, the special permit was granted by a unanimous vote.

The hearing for the special permit for a cell tower at 73 Chestnut Hill Road began at 3:15. Dolan again provided a synopsis of the project regarding the requests and inquiries from the ZBA. Dolan repeated that the project was approved by the Conservation Commission and reminded the ZBA that major revisions to the drainage plan had been introduced at the prior hearing. There was discussion about Chestnut Hill Road leading to the compound and how far the town plows in the winter and what the responsibility of AT&T would be in that regard. AT&T agreed to install a gate at a location to be specified by Director of Operations Maynard Forbes to prevent the unknowing and luckless driver who might stray onto the steep part Chestnut Hill in the winter.

ZBA member Cynthia Webber broached the subject of tower removal and site remediation, and Richard Comi, the town's consultant, advised that in the case of both towers a bond for removal must be provided. Comi said that the ZBA could either ask industry reps their recommendations and then add a certain percentage yearly to keep up with inflation, or just "choose a really big amount" to cover the cost of future tower removal. There are also specifications in the leases with the landowners regarding removal.

Similar discussions about tower-compound size were only briefly revisited since much of the discussion took place during the prior hearing. Jeff Purvis, a resident abutting the proposed Chestnut Hill tower, was present and, having already voiced opposition to the tower at a prior hearing, this time expressed his opinion about the ugliness of the monopine, but otherwise remained silent. The ZBA unanimously voted to grant AT&T the special permit to construct the cell tower on the Keswick property and the variance for a larger tower compound area.

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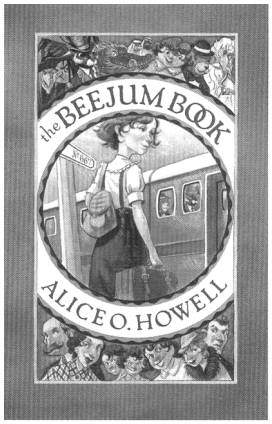

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Town Nurse Proposal

As some of you have read previously in the November issue of the *Monterey News*, a proposal for a town nurse was presented to the Board of Selectmen. Here I would like to address the background for the idea of a town nurse, and a few Medicare regulations.

For those of you who do not know me, my name is Kathie Tryon. I am a Registered Nurse. I live on Main Road, and I am a lifelong resident of Monterey (not to be confused with Kathryn Tryon, of New Marlborough Road). I currently am attending Elms College RN to BS program, and will be graduating in May of 2012. In addition to my regular classes, I am working on the Monterey Town Nurse Proposal as a voluntary, community-service honors' project.

In May 2012, if the voting community supports the proposal for a town nurse, a Town Nurse Advisory Committee will then be formed. One of their tasks will be to advertise, interview, and hire a RN. To be completely forthright, I would be honored to be one of the candidates considered for the nurse position; however, if the committee chooses another candidate, that nurse will have my full support and help. There are many outstanding experienced community health nurses in our area that would do an exemplary job for our community.

Out of my thirty years working as a RN, twenty have been working locally as a community health nurse. When I began working for the VNA in 1982, and continuing up until approximately 1995, VNA nurses could follow in their homes on an ongoing basis Medicare patients who had chronic health care issues. During that time period, the nurse would case-manage patients with chronic health care issues. For example, if a person was diagnosed with heart disease or hypertension, the nurse would visit an average of once a week to listen to the patient's heart and lungs; gather data such as blood pressure, pulse, respirations, temperature, oxygen saturation (FOX); assess and measure for any fluid retention, shortness of breath, chest pain, issues with bowel and/or bladder, and any other complaints; teach and review diet recommendations; teach and review what medications were to be taken, evaluate the response to medications, pre-fill medication boxes, if needed; obtain any needed lab samples and transport the person to the lab; provide ongoing education and emotional support to the patient and caregivers; assess the person's ability to care for themselves (bathing, meal prep, housekeeping, etc.) and work with the patient, family, and doctor in keeping the patient in their home by keeping their chronic health issues stable. Because of our interventions as community health nurses we were very successful in keeping people in their homes as long as possible and reducing long-term care and hospital admissions.

Today, Medicare does not pay for chronic care case-management; it only pays for acute (serious) medical care or chronic conditions that change and become more serious, usually associated with a hospitalization. Medicare regulations (www.medicare.gov/Publications/Pubs/pdf/10969.pdf) are vague and cumbersome to read and understand. VNA Community Health Care's (2011) web site explains Medicare Home Health Care regulations in an easier-to-understand manner. *"Medicare pays for professional home-health care services for eligible senior citizens, and younger disabled individuals, if they meet fairly strict criteria";* it goes on to cite the following six areas that Medicare will not pay for Home Care: (1) *"The patient's condition is chronic and stable."* For example, a diabetic who chronically runs high blood sugars or a person whose blood pressure >

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chronically runs high would be considered by Medicare to be chronic and stable. These types of patients still would benefit from ongoing health care intervention and management. People are usually seen by their doctor every three to six months. A lot can happen in three to six months; early detection by more frequent monitoring can help prevent and/or identify potential health issues, which might initiate a change in treatment, or a new treatment. This type of proactive care (case-management) decreases the use of expensive and limited resources, such as EMS, emergency room visits, urgent doctor visits, hospitalizations, long-term care admissions, medications, and caregiver burnout. (2) *"The patient is not likely to improve with home care."* Again, Medicare considers the following examples as "chronic and stable." A person who had a recent hip replacement and received ongoing physical therapy, but now is no longer showing any further improvement, must be discharged from Medicare Services. This would be the same for people with physical disabilities after having a stroke; once they no longer show an improvement; they must be discharged from Medicare Services. These types of patients still need ongoing care and monitoring to maintain them at their current physical level, prevent deteriorations such as contractures, and possibly help them show improvement over a longer period time. (3) *"The patient is not homebound."* (4) *"A required medical visit did not take place with your health care provider within 90 days prior to, or the 30 days following, the start of home-care services."* (5) *"Home care is not medically necessary to treat the patient's medical condition."* (6) *"Only assistance with ADLs* [bathing, dressing, etc.] *is needed."*

What does this all have to do with Monterey? Well, our community is getting older and we are aging in place. According to the U.S. Census, persons 62 and older comprised 29.3 percent of the population in Monterey; 36.2 percent of Monterey households have individuals 65 years and over; and 28.6 percent of Monterey residents live alone. Monterey's aging trend is shared across all of rural America (www.ruralhealthweb.org). Berkshire County's overall health is rated "poor to fair" (www.countyhealthrankings.org/massachusetts/berkshire/2), another trend shared by rural America. In Berkshire County, according to MassCHIP (2010), (www.mass.gov/Eeohhs2/docs/dph/masschip/diabetes/diabeteschnachna1.rtf), we see increasing incidences of chronic conditions such as diabetes, heart disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), stroke, and obesity, just to name some.

These health issues and trends are real, locally, statewide, and nationally. I encourage *Monterey News* readers to become more informed by looking at the web sites I have included; read and listen to local, state, and national news regarding the current state of health care.

In future issues of the *Monterey News*, I'll address more on the state of health care, why a town nurse would be beneficial to our community, the role of a town nurse, and what the costs would be.

— Kathie Tryon

For questions or comments Kathie may be reached at KathieTryon@yahoo.com.

Berkshire VNA Free Falls Prevention Program

Unintentional falls are a great threat to the independence and health of adults ages 65 and older. Falls are often preventable through strengthening and balance training, education, and improving home safety. The Berkshire Visiting Nurse Association (VNA) will be presenting a fall prevention program in collaboration with "Strength In Numbers," a fall prevention program from the VNA and Hospice of Cooley Dickinson.

The Berkshire VNA, in cooperation with the Great Barrington Senior Center, invites you to participate in an educational series of six Falls Prevention sessions at the Claire Teague Senior Center in Great Barrington.

Once a week for six weeks, Berkshire VNA physical and occupational therapists will lead sessions on determining your own risk of falling, strengthening exercises, balance activities, managing your own medications, visual concerns, and home safety recommendations. Practical items such as strengthening devices, medication organizers, and visual aides will be distributed to series participants.

Please contact Rebecca Tillinghast at the Claire Teague Senior Center in Great Barrington if you are interested in participating in this program. There is a limit of 20 participants. The anticipated start date is after January 2012. Call for details: 413 528 1881.

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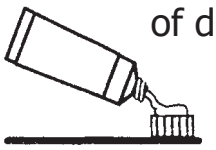

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Route 23 Monterey

Workshop on Bylaw Udates

The Monterey Planning Board held a sparsely attended but extremely productive public workshop at the Town Hall on Tuesday, November 15. A small but nimble group, we were able to review the entire zoning bylaw revisions section by section with Mark Bobrowski, an expert in land use law who literally wrote the book on land use, *The Handbook of Massachusetts Land Use and Planning Law*. The Planning Board has been capitalizing on Bobrowski's experience with writing zoning bylaws, his superior organizational skills, and his expert legal advice to improve the Monterey Zoning Bylaws. Please log onto the Town web site for a download of the draft, www.montereyma.gov, or pick up a copy at the Town Hall.

Bobrowski began his presentation by describing the expanded section one as the "handshake of the bylaw" that states the purpose and authority of the zoning bylaw. We noted that section two of the current bylaw, Definitions, was moved to the end of the bylaw instead of the beginning. It was generally agreed that it was more sensible to have the definitions at the end as you would a glossary. In the revision, section two is now Districts; Bobrowski noted that no new districts were created and suggested that we dispense with the wordy description of the districts and insert a map of the districts and neighborhoods. Planning Board member Stephen Enoch suggested that we could also use GPS coordinates. Regarding section three, Use Regulations, Bobrowski said that they are all in table form now and that the old language ("strike through") would be represented in the charts that he created. In addition to clarifying the zoning bylaws with the use of charts and maps, Bobrowski's work makes the material more interesting and accessible. Section four, Dimensional Regulations, has not changed.

Section five is the ever-popular Nonconforming Structures Uses and Structures, which both the Zoning Board of Appeals and the Planning Board wrestle with regularly. The revision draft presented seemed not to have a clear understanding of how our current bylaw works (or doesn't work), and Planning Board chair Maggie Leonard (this reporter) reviewed the current bylaw to make sure Bobrowski understood the current system and the controversies. He either didn't understand or didn't agree with the 25 percent limitation that our zoning bylaws require when the nonconforming nature of a structure or use is increased and described it as "draconian." He indicated that such limitations were more common for "office buildings and widget factories." He will reword the entire section in his next draft. Zoning Board of Appeals member and Assessor Bob Lazzarini noted the importance of this section, stating, "Sixty percent of the properties in Monterey are nonconforming."

In section six, General Regulations, we are proposing language about loading docks, and there is a provision for the Planning Board to be the special permit granting authority (SPGA) for signs since they grant the initial permit and that would make it more convenient to the applicant. Bobrowski also suggested that the Planning Board be the SPGA for the parking regulations (section seven), and Select Board chair Wayne Burkhart asked if the Planning Board would need a set of special procedures since they are not historically an SPGA in Monterey. Bobrowski replied no, the usual posting of meetings, timelines, and advertising requirements are the same no matter what board does it.

Bobrowski split the General Regulations and created a new section seven, Special Regulations. Veteran users of the zoning bylaws will be thrilled that everything may soon be in one comprehensive document. The new section seven includes regulations for: Common Driveway; Stream and Pond Protection; Multifamily Dwellings; Nonmunicipal Educational or Religious Uses; and Parking; language and regulations for bed-and-breakfasts have also been added. The Planning Board made a note to discuss the proposed regulations for B&Bs.

Section eight is our newly approved Telecommunications bylaw, and Bobrowski did not make any changes. Section nine Administration and Procedures, proposes to update the zoning bylaws to conform with statute regarding dimension of buildings that do not require a building permit (14 ft. x 14 ft.) and adds language to codify the Planning Board's scope of site plan review. Bobrowski asked if we wanted solar or wind regulations for the zoning bylaw, and we replied that we would love to have the language on file for possible future use.

Some minor organizational and numbering problems were also noted. We reviewed the Definitions, section eleven, and Bob Lazzarini asked if the definition could "make note that certain items are not structures, such as stepping stones, driveways, stone walls, and retaining walls." The last of these, retaining walls, was controversial because the Planning Board has issued opinions to the ZBA based on retaining walls being considered as structures. Obviously more discussion is needed, and Bobrowski agreed to get the definition for "structure" from the state statute for both boards to review.

We reviewed the aforementioned Use Tables and decided that bed-and-breakfasts need to be reviewed by the ZBA in every district, and Leonard noted that we should allow camps in Ag-Res by special permit. In describing the Use Tables, Bobrowski noted that the current bylaws allow "any lawful use," and he worked on specifying various allowed uses so the town is not vulnerable to anything from, as he said, "cement plants to auto dumps."

The work is ongoing and the Planning Board appreciates and suggestions and participation from interested parties.

— Maggie Leonard, Planning Board.

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To E-Read or Not to E-Read?

We at the Monterey Library are aware of the huge popularity of e-readers, which promise to change how some of us read. In October Cynthia Laino came from CW-MARS and showed us how to download not only e-books but audios and videos as well using Overdrive, software that is available on the CWMARS digital catalog site. Cynthia showed us how to access the list within Overdrive that will tell us which devices the digital material can be downloaded to—trying to keep up with all the new releases of devices that are being created to allow us to access digital material is a full-time job. CWMARS has begun expanding its collection of e-books, and fortunately for those of us in areas like Monterey downloading an e-book does not require the highest internet speeds.

Thanks to the Friends of the Monterey Library, we now have three e-readers in the library. We have a Sony e-Reader, a Nook, and a Kindle. At this time we can't let them out of the building, but we have them so you can come in and actually hold them, use them for a few minutes, and see what you like or don't like. We're not trying to sell them, but so many people buy online in this day and age that you might not have the chance to actually hold one before you order. In time I expect we will be lending them out—and for that reason we would gladly accept donations of usable e-readers from anyone upgrading to a newer model. For now we have them as a display and so that we can demonstrate how to download an e-book. Come on in—if you don't have a CWMARS card, now would be a good time to get one so you'll be able to borrow e-books instead of buying them.

A HUGE thanks to the Friends of the Monterey Library for buying a projector and screen for the Knox room. We've had several programs with this equipment already. The projector is high definition and is very easy to use; it can play a DVD or hook up to computers which can use the wifi the library offers. It has a sound component as well, and there has been some noise about movie nights as we used to have them in the past at the library; if you're interested in helping out with this, let us know. To go along with the projector the Friends also bought a 102-inch-wide screen—so widescreen movies are nice, big, and clear, and when we're running a workshop on e-books the whole wide computer screen fits on the screen. THANK YOU FRIENDS!

Finally, we will be open on Saturday, December 24, from 9:30-12:30 and again on Saturday, December 31, from 9:30-12:30. We will be closed both of those nights and again on Monday, December 26, and Monday , January 2.

As of now, CWMARS will be switching to a different software starting on December 30 at 5 pm—so expect that certain operations in the online public access catalog will not be the same even before that date, and there will be no operations at all starting on that date for an undetermined amount of time. In order for us to open on December 31 we will be using an offline circulation system that will absolutely require your card—so please remember to bring it. Your card will also help in the transition to the new system, which should happen at some point the following week—until then it is essential that you bring in your card. Thanks for your patience and understanding—we are very hopeful that after the transition this Evergreen software will be even better than the Millenium that we currently use. Delivery will continue during the transition, but you will not be able to place new holds.

— Mark Makuc, Library Director

2012 Sporting Licenses

The Town Clerk's Office will not be selling sporting licenses for 2012. Only 23 out of the 351 cities and towns in the state will be selling them; 328 have opted out of the new "all online" system.

The Division of Fisheries & Wildlife will no longer issue paper fishing and hunting licenses. All transactions will be completed through a new contractor-run electronic licensing system called Mass-FishHunt.

Licenses will be available online if you have a computer and printer, or at the following places in Berkshire County:

- Monterey Library (public computer and printer available)
- Mill River Store, Mill River
- Western Region District Office, Dalton
- Avid Sports, Pittsfield
- Dick's Sporting Goods, Pittsfield
- Onota Boat Livery, Pittsfield
- Walmart, North Adams
- Walmart, Pittsfield

— Linda Thorpe, Town Clerk

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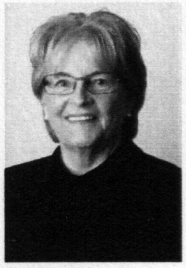
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How star and planet hold their span
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And reaching so to measure far
May find the wonder that we are.

— A. O. Howell

lillies

to the one whose life is flowers
you brought lillies
sweet as little ladies
laughing in the summer sun
I smell them everywhere I go

to the one whose life is color
you brought dahlias
bright red dahlias
red as the blushing cheeks
of a girl in love
I see them everywhere I go

to the one whose life is grace
you brought anemones
tall swaying anemones
gibbous, slow dancing, like lovers
under a hovering moon
I feel them everywhere I go

to the on whose life is ever changing
you brought fallen leaves
multicolored leaves
fading, like the light in her eyes
as the years like a train pull away
I try to let them go every day.

—Boney Oscar
(10/11 for . . .)

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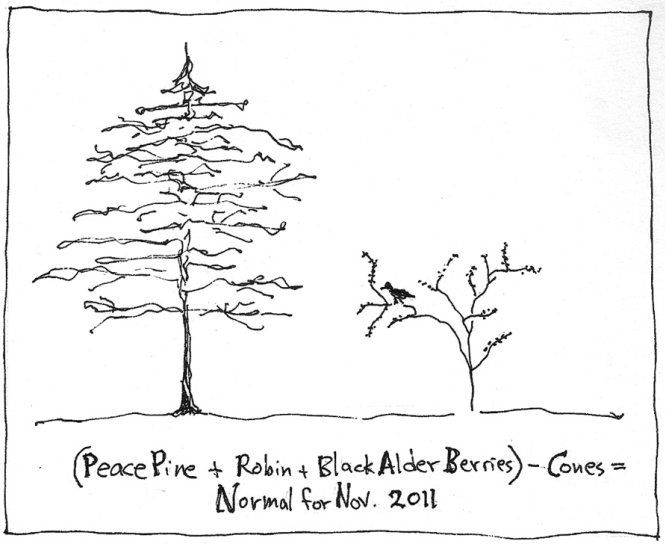
Feast or Famine in the Woods

Out in the woods and swamps this season we have a lot of robins and hardly any white pine cones. As we know, if the butterfly gently sweeps its wings in Java, it affects the mountain lion in Monterey, Massachusetts. No butterfly is an island, is the way that famous thought can go. Still, what is up with the robins and the pines is bound to be a matter for human cogitation, because we are observant animals and we are always trying to figure things out.

These days any observation outdoors is prone to trouble us. What a wet summer! It must be Global Warming, or perhaps some other form of The End. What a lot of snow in early October! It's just not right, not normal, and spells more trouble. What a warm day for November! This can't be good.

In our family we notice the pinecones because they are part of our indoor cooking and heating story. We have a fossil-fuel-free deal going here, and we use pine pitch for an easy start. Those pinecones are always frosted with easy-lighter. In fact, one Christmas we had such an abundance of them we put them in big paper bags and dolled these up with a piece of ribbon and a little essay on white pines. The gift package was called Sticky Starters and we gave it to people who had locally harvested renewables in their home heating and cooking stories, like us.

This year, those Sticky Starters are in short supply. We have been going around with upward gaze, looking for the white pine tops to be flecked with brown, cones ready to come down in a wind. Those pines are nearly all green this year, emphasis on photosynthesis, not reproduction. We've had to turn more heavily to White Papery Starters from the birches, just as eager and helpful as the pinecones. But as we turn, our little human condition pesters us with "What's it all about? What is nigh?"



A quick trip to the reference section reveals that the white pine, the Tree of Peace of the Haudenosaunee Indians, is known to some to have a peak in cone production every three to five years. In other words, the white pine takes a year or more off in the seed department. Why have we not observed this before? Maybe we were distracted by other wonders, three to five years ago. Maybe we had such a stash of cones still in the baskets and feed sacks in the woodshed that we didn't need to pick any up, so we noticed other things.

There are other things happening this year, too. The swamp is more full of robins than we have ever known it to be, also full of those bright red berries folks call "winterberries," or speckled alders. These are holly relatives, same genus as the typical Christmas holly that has a shiny green leaf with prickles and adorns many a wreath. The speckled alder drops its leaves, though, making it a dramatic display in the swamps, not to mention an easy meal for the many robins.

One year a neighbor came by to talk about apple blossoms. This was twenty years back. It was spring, and a big year for apple blossoms, but our friend was not happy. He'd heard that apples poured it on with blossoms just when they knew something awful was about to happen. He worried that this was the year

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we could all kiss it good-bye and that the apples were the "canary in the coal mine" letting us know that we were all about to die. He cited some well-known (to him) apple-farmer lore in which the farmer heads out to the orchard with a two-by-four and beats up the trees. The trees freak out that the End is Nigh and give their all for blossom production, so there will be a ton of apples and a continuation of the species, despite the beating and all that this implies to the mind of an apple tree.

As humans, we can't help applying this story, and everything else we've ever heard or misheard, to the pinecones and robins situation this year, this month, today. Here's how it looks:

We have a ton of robins, so the species must be about to die out.

We don't have any pinecones, so the white pines must be in great shape because they think they can take the year off from reproduction.

The big question is: what does this mean for us folks? Is there a lesson here? How is this, like everything else, all about us?

The answer? (I heard this in the swamp, so take it from me.) Not a thing. Just forget it! Have a good Christmas, and maybe go for a walk and look around, but do not, please, think that anything you see or think is all about you, or should I say, us.

— Bonner J. McAllester

Area Artists Exhibit Very Small Works in Knox Gallery

The Knox Gallery is pleased to celebrate its first anniversary with *Monterey Miniatures*, an exhibition of work in all media that is not larger than 6 inches in any dimension. The opening reception will be held on Friday, December 2, from 6–8 pm in the Knox Gallery, Monterey Library, 452 Main Road.

Monterey Miniatures includes work in two and three dimensions in a wide variety of media: sculpture, drawing, painting, ceramics, collage, photography, and more. This exhibition includes work by Monterey residents, work by residents of surrounding towns, and work from artists out of the area who have connections with Monterey. Much of the work will be available for sale and may be purchased throughout the exhibition.

The opening of this show will also serve as a preview to *Monterey Makers*, an open-studio event being held the following day, December 3, from 10 am–4 pm. *Monterey Makers* will highlight a number of local artists and makers, many of whom will be represented with work in the *Monterey Miniatures* exhibition.

This show exemplifies the spirit of the Gallery as an exhibition space. It will continue to present a wide variety of work and serve as a focal point within the community. Many of the participating artists will be present at the opening reception. Please join us in this celebration.

Monterey Miniatures will be open from December 2 through January 28 during regular Monterey Library hours: Monday 7–9 pm, Tuesday 9:30 am–noon, Wednesday 2–5 pm, Thursday 4–6 pm, Friday 4–7 pm, Saturday 9:30 am–12:30 pm and 7–9 pm.

ॐ

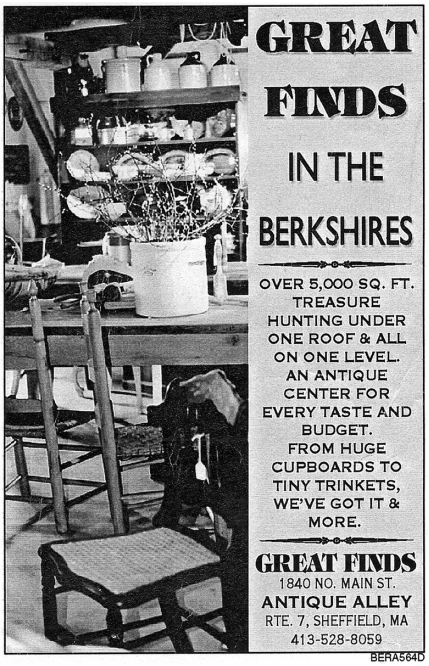
Community Potluck Dec. 21

At the November Monterey Community Potluck, we enjoyed a lovely evening of thanksgiving and exploring the meaning of gratitude in our lives. Thank you to Kit and Connie for their presentation and thanks to our community for their involvement.

For the December potluck (on the winter solstice!), Mary Kate Jordan will be talking about the year-end festivals of light that all our Western cultures celebrate.

The next Monterey Community Potluck Dinner will be held in the Fellowship Hall of the Monterey Meetinghouse on Wednesday, December 21, at 6 pm. Please bring a dish to share with a serving utensil and a place setting and silverware for yourself. Everyone is welcome.

— Barbara Dahlman & Kyle Pierce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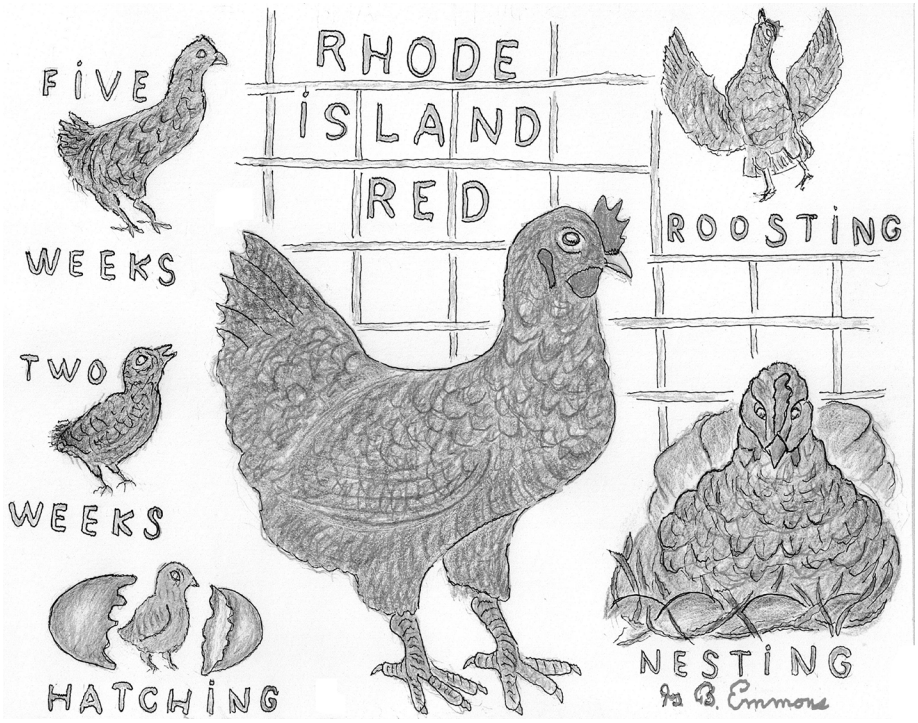
The Barnyard

The classic children's book *The Little Red Hen*, published by Little Golden Books, is available at the Monterey Library. This barnyard fable is an adaptation of an old Russian folk tale for teaching youngsters to read and learn about personal initiative with a moral lesson of a good work ethic!

In the narrative, the plot begins when the hen finds a grain of wheat and asks other barnyard animals for help to plant it for food. After not getting any support, she and her chicks elect to keep and eat all the bread for themselves . . . hence the moral of the tale: "If man does not work, let him not eat."

Children growing up on a farm, especially during the Depression, were usually expected to complete assigned chores after they came home from school and before coming to dinner. If their father, the farmer, worked from Sun to Sun, as in the parable, the work of their mother, the farmer's wife, was never done. She might have been perceived as the Little Red Hen with a strong moral work ethic, often passed on to the oldest daughter.

My sister and I grew up on a farm in Warwick, Rhode Island, and are cowriting a documentary periodical of an agricultural



generation for the local papers and farm journals there. In my father's barnyard, the poultry breed of his choice was the Rhode Island Red, known for laying an egg almost every day and being good to eat. The origin of this the state bird was in nearby Little Compton, Rhode Island, and a monument of a hen there is in the National Register Of Historic places. Taking care of chickens in all stages of their growth meant learning the facts of life even if we did not know which came first, the chicken or the egg.

As the early darkness of winter afternoons shades the barns of Monterey, except for Gould Farm's, they are idle silhouettes of a bygone epoch, but lights of celebration in the nearby farmhouses soon go on again as farming families who carried their work habits over to later lifestyles gather for the holidays and country cooking. At the church, singing of Christmas carols brings back childhood memories. And a half-mile east on Main Road past the one room School House on the left is a red barn with an illuminated nativity scene in the loft.

If Christmas Eve should be a clear night, a bright and shining star may look down where "the little Lord Jesus lies asleep in the hay."

— George B. Emmons

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Six Years Ago

It's hard to believe I started writing *Monterey News* columns six years ago this month; that's approximately seventy-two "Letter from" musings, give or take. A quarter of my life resides in the printed pages of the town paper. There was college, study abroad, graduation, Roosevelt and the move to DC, and moments of reflection along the way—when I think back, I start to have trouble remembering them all. As another holiday season approaches, and another year draws to a close, it seems like a good time to take a step back and reflect.

We live in an increasingly digitalized world. Every time I turn around, Apple releases a new product, Internet speeds increase, or there is that nagging realization that compact discs are going to be obsolete someday relatively soon. Whenever I write a post for work, post on Twitter, or submit a piece to another blog or publication, it will most likely end up online. Someone who searches for me someday might find it, and while this isn't something I think about often, I'm aware of this reality.

About a month ago, I was chatting with a friend online and I mentioned that I wrote a monthly column. The person promptly went online to search for them, and after several minutes admitted defeat. That's when I realized how unique and precious this paper print medium really is—these columns are separate from some of my hectic work and social media life. These writings often reflect a sliver of home, and a connection to a town and life near and dear to my heart. I guard them closely, and while I embrace, and am humbled by, the opportunity to write for the *News*, I find that I do not want to share them with cyberspace.

Someday of course, these may end up online; I have no way of knowing whether that will happen. But, as I reflect on these past six years I can safely say that I genuinely treasure the classic print medium and I love writing for a publication that functions as newspapers did years ago. As time flies by and changes continue, I sometimes yearn for the days when time stood still—or at least it felt like it did for me personally. When I write columns, I get to capture a moment in time and re-reading ones from years ago is revealing to say the least. The simple fact that they are not in an electronic format only adds to that feeling.

I love the holiday season, because it means I can return to my hometown, the little hamlet of Monterey. I look forward to visiting and catching up with family and friends, decorating the Christmas tree, and celebrating the start to another year. I wish all of you a safe and joyous holiday season filled with laughter and good health and I extend my sincerest appreciation to everyone who has read these columns over these past six years; time flies when you're having fun.

— Tarsi Dunlop

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November Wildlife Report

The wildlife in the past month has been so wild and shy that only a few of us have seen any. Early in October, Tom Thorn saw loons out on Lake Garfield and in mid-month, I saw a bluebird in Tyringham. Yesterday, Joe and Cora and I watched a Cooper's hawk taking a prolonged bath in the shallows of a small pond here on Hupi Road.

Turkeys have been foraging with good long toes and shanks along the Land Trust Trail on Mt. Hunger Road, roughing up the beech leaves on the ground. It was a good year for beechnuts hereabouts, if not for acorns. Young slugs are up and active, feeding on November mushrooms, black and shiny. There was also a frog in our brook just recently, no longer living—maybe washed out of hibernation by the big rains.

Thanks for all your observations over the months. Call or email if you like.

— Bonner McAllester
528-9385 bmca@berkshire.net

Christmas Eve at Monterey Church

The Christmas Eve service at the Monterey Church will be at 7 pm on Saturday, December 24. As usual, we will hear the Christmas story and sing beloved carols. But we'll also hear from some beloved musicians, so you won't want to miss it! Whether you're a regular churchgoer, an occasional churchgoer, or simply a lover of a good story, good music, and/or this lovely little town, please come!

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Wendy Jensen

"Garden Gustation"

What's cooking from Monterey Gardens & Farms

Crazy for Carrots

Well if that 20+ inches of snow wasn't a kick in the pants to get the garden to bed I don't know what was. The snow was coming and I quickly covered the remaining carrots and beets with a sheet of plastic so I could, hopefully, peel it back and dig the veggies when the storm had passed. Fortunately, the snow didn't stay, but it looked like it possibly could! I certainly got to the fall chores when the snow finally left, and now everything is out of the ground except the leeks, and the garlic is planted. There's always a bit more to do, but I've been running out of steam. I bet it will all still be there in the spring. For me, it's time to think about hunkering down for the cold months ahead: bringing in the firewood, storing the remainder of the root crops, and filling the house with aromas of homemade bread and soup.

Ah yes, the carrots. I have never had much success with carrots in the past; it really killed me to pull up the baby carrot plants to thin them and it was difficult to keep the weeds out. I decided a few years ago that that had to change. I wanted to eat my own carrots! Last year was really the first successful year. I grow a few varieties that have different maturation dates and keeping qualities. Fedco's Rainbow mix is early and a beautiful mix of orange and yellow shades. Mokum and Scarlet Nantes are some other favorites. The latter keep better in the root cellar than the first. I amended the carrot beds with compost and turned it in. I carefully laid out my rows and gently dropped in the seeds with my little handheld seeder that keeps me from dumping the whole package at once. They are going to HAVE to be thinned regardless, so the thinning should start right there. I've read about other ways to plant the seeds a bit more sparingly by mixing them with radish seeds or sand before planting, but I haven't tried either method. Keep the seeds watered and you will be rewarded with tiny little carrot plants.

When the little green row begins to be visible from a distance, it is time to thin. The plants will be about 2-3" tall. I've discovered the use of sharp, pointed scissors for this job. Somehow it feels so much more humane . . . that sounds ridiculous! Anyway, I simply cut the tops off of the plants in between the ones I wish to keep, about an inch or so apart. I also tend to the tiny weeds that may show up, and I keep on them until the plants have established themselves. I've found that diligence with the weeding is an important part of carrot growing. It's pretty fussy in the beginning, but when the plants have come to maturity, it is SO worth it. The carrot tops alone are a beautiful sight in the garden; they also make beautiful garnishes on dishes. I planted a number of beds in succession, so we have had carrots all summer long. After completing the harvest this fall, it looks like we have grown well over 75 pounds of carrots to feed us into next spring. Even so, that is a fair bit of carrots for two people. It's practically mandatory that we eat raw carrots with lunch every day. I've been trying carrot muffins, carrot cakes, carrot salads, stews, etc. Carrots are such delicious, crisp, sweetness; I guess I'm just plain *crazy for*

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carrots. This carrot soup recipe comes from a great chef and friend in Maine.

Don's Delicious Carrot Soup

(Underlined ingredients were from the garden or could be found locally.)

4 Tablespoons butter
1 large onion, minced
3 Tablespoons tomato paste
2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced (or ¼ cup white rice; Don's recipe called for the rice but I've been trying to use what I grow)
2 quarts homemade chicken broth
1½ lbs. carrots, cut into ½" pieces
1 cup High Lawn Farm heavy cream or half & half
Salt & freshly ground black pepper
Carrot curls for garnish (optional)

1. Melt butter in stockpot over medium heat. Sauté onions 5 minutes. Add tomato paste, then potatoes (or rice).

2. Gradually add broth. Then carrots. Simmer uncovered about 40 minutes until tender

3. Cool a bit and puree with immersion blender or in blender until very smooth. Salt and pepper to taste. Reheat, swirl in cream, and serve.

Makes 10-12 servings.

Happy Hunkering!

— Wendy G. Jensen
wendygj@gmail.com

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Massachusetts Fails to Protect Its Consumers Once Again

To the Editor:

An article posted on the EMF Safety Network website, "Maine utility admits smart meters cause interference" (http:emfsafetynetwork.org/?p=6362, posted November 19, 2011) states:

"The Portland Press Herald reports the Maine Public advocate's office released a statement this week saying: 'Smart Meters are interfering with a wide range of household electronic devices, from garage door openers and WiFi devices to security systems' [a violation of the Federal Communication Commission].

"On Central Maine Power's FAQ, in answer to the question 'Will the Smart Meter interfere with other household appliances such as computer routers, television signal, cordless phones, etc?' they respond: 'Separating interfering devices usually reduces interference, so make sure the wireless device is located as far from the smart meter as possible and move the wireless device away from any walls that may absorb the signal.'

"According to the FCC Electronic Code of Federal Regulations meters [in any state] are not supposed to cause interference, and if they do the FCC states, 'The operator of a radio frequency device shall be required to cease operating the device upon notification by a Commission representative that the device is causing harmful interference.'"

Anyone, including Massachusetts residents, experiencing interference with such devices, should file a complaint with the FCC. You can also call your utility company to find out when a wireless meter was installed on your home. Our meter was installed in September of 2006 without our consent. This is also when we started hearing a constant noise, harmonics outside as well as inside our home, as well as interference on our appliances. We continue to experience the physical symptoms of the radiation as well.

Western Mass Electric has been offering their customers the option of hard wiring the meters to the phone lines, thus eliminating the microwave radiation leakage in the air. National Grid has failed to respond to our registered letters demanding to replace the wireless meter, nor have they given us the same consideration that Western Mass Electric is giving its customers. If more customers demand this option, National Grid will be forced to do right by its customers.

—Sandra Chianfoni & Laura Catullo

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From the Meetinghouse . . .

Both Sides Now

Yesterday, as I write this, I watched morning light spread across my usual corner of Monterey. Today I watched morning light spread across Superstition Mountain, a tall outcropping of red rock close to Phoenix.

Last week, back in Monterey, I listened to Susan Boyle's version of "Both Sides Now," a familiar audio icon for Judy Collins fans, and an interesting reality check for anyone who actually listens to the words. Imagine being in the state of mind described in the chorus: *I've looked at (clouds, love, life) from both sides now . . . and still, somehow, it's . . . illusions I recall. I really don't know (clouds, love, life) at all.*

I find I'm intrigued by what that chorus of the song actually offers: a challenge to understand self-in-relation-to-the-world, not simply a commentary on the world itself. This kind of encounter can be disconcerting. Even downright dislocating, like my encounters with geography.

Superstition Mountain is in eastern Arizona, but it's also on the western edge of the Superstition range. That makes sense in my life: I grew up near the northern border of western New York state, the cultural and linguistic far-eastern arm of the great Midwest. I vacation on the west coast of Florida, which is, of course, the east coast of the Gulf of Mexico. When I lived in Manhattan, all my apartments but one were on the Upper West Side. Moving to the East Side was my Manhattan swan song, and entre to the Berkshires. And all of us who live in Monterey are here on the western edge of New England either by birth, by choice, or both. All in all, I find I'm grateful for this somewhat bewildering sense of disorder. It requires the merger of linear thinking with the wisdoms of heart, body, and soul.

Linear thinking makes a really good rudder to steer by, but, divorced from wisdom, it's a terrible lifeboat. That ship hasn't served us well as a tool for getting from one year to the next, if the last hundred fifty years are any indication.

As an experiment, the merger of thinking with compassion, head and heart, will be a wonderful way to navigate December. After all, we have Winter Solstice, Hanukkah, and Christmas to negotiate as independent spiritual feast days before we arrive at New Year's Eve, when we traditionally all celebrate change of year together. So imagine seeing each of these feasts of light from both sides—yours, mine; theirs, ours—and refusing to square off in competition. Imagine hearing the tales of each of the traditions while living the month free from defining anyone else as better, or worse. Why? Because each of us holds within our hearts moments, days, even years, of auld lang syne, times so worth remembering that others might simply consider them fairy tales. So both your world and mine will be truer, kinder, more authentic, holding all the heartfelt tales within its embrace.

Heartfelt, too, the wishes to everyone in town for a merger of the best of auld lang syne with a wonderful year to come, from the Parish Council at the Meetinghouse.

— Mary Kate Jordan

Personal Notes

Remembering Ian Rodgers

12/08/01–12/08/11

It's hard to believe it has been 10 years since we lost our son, brother, firefighter, and friend

Thank you to all for your continued support, prayers, and keeping Ian close to your hearts and memories.

— Cathy, Buddy, Rachel, Jeff, & Daniel

Banners in Boston Craft Shows

Michael and Maureen Banner will be displaying their work in two Boston crafts shows in December. On December 2–4 they will be in booth 223 in The Washington Craft Show (http://www.craftsamericashows.com/) at the Washington Convention Center. The following weekend, December 9–11, they will be in booth 220 in Craft Boston Holiday (http://www.societyofcrafts.org/) at the Cyclorama, 539 Tremont St.

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Monterey Turkey Bowl II

The Second Not-Exactly-Annual Monterey Turkey Bowl played out on a cool, overcast Thanksgiving morning at Greene Park. An enthusiastic turnout—seventeen strong—necessitated a playoff format, with four squads of semifinalists kicking up sod in the outfield of the baseball diamond. Dave Crane, Steve Graves, and Felix & Henry Carroll took on the daunting trio of Allentuck, Allentuck, & Reed (not a law firm) on Field A, while the Wollman clan—Mark and sons Ethan, Max, & Sam (Philly's answer to the Manning family)—did battle on Field B with Kaplan (Ira), Kaplan (Wilson), Lichtenthal (Paolo) & Lichtenthal (Sebastian)—also not a law firm. Yet.

On a day when conditions were tenuous—soggy field, wet ball, and a common playbook consisting of "go long and get open," defense came to the fore, certainly in the A game, where Felix Carroll helped deflate the Air Allentuck attack with two interceptions (on his way to five on the day) as he and his mates slogged their way into the title game against Kaplan & Co., who held off the Wollman "Velcro D" for a shot at their own Thanksgiving Day glory.

The Graves Fearsome Foursome (make that 3½) were cruising to the promised land, up three scores to zip, when the Lichtenthal boys were taken out of action at halftime (Mom), replaced by two fans from the sidelines—Marshall Graves and Irene Tan. In a performance out of a Walter Mitty fantasy, M. Graves tossed two quick scores to Ira & Irene, and as the sun came out just before one, they kicked off with the title game knotted at 21-21.

Despite a hurry-up offense, and quarterback-by-committee, which had proved so effective all day, the S. Graves squad had been unable to find the end zone on three consecutive chances, any one of which would have clinched the cup. So there was an enormous sigh of relief mixed with hard-won euphoria when Graves found Crane just inside the line for all the marbles.

MVP: Felix Carroll

Rookie of the Game: Henry Carroll

Many thanks to all the players who came out to make a day of it, and we'll see you next year. Or maybe in two or three years.

— David Crane

Softball Season Recap

We had another memorable and exciting season, filled with many outstanding individual and team performances. Thanks to all who participated, whether it was just one game, several, or lots, as all players are needed to carry on the tradition of Monterey Sunday Softball.

There is a saying in baseball that is also true for softball, and that is that in every game (and season) you're likely to see something that you've never seen before. That is certainly true for Monterey Softball. Just a few examples: for the first time ever, a player hit a home run from both sides of the plate in the same game; a player was thrown out at first base by the shortstop whipping the ball underhanded; longtime veteran Steve Miller hit two triples in a game and a career high four for the season; eight-year veteran Steve Graves hit his first two triples of his career. These players are certainly refusing to give in to age.

Perhaps the most exciting game of the season was the last, one, on Columbus Day weekend, the highest scoring game of the year by far—a thrilling 23–21 battle that was in doubt until the last out.

We did, apparently for the first time, begin what we hope will become another tradition of Monterey Softball, and that is a friendly rivalry game with a contingent from Copake, New York. The game was on our home field at Greene Park on August 20. We took a 7–0 lead after three innings, only to have the Copake team rally to win 8–7, despite Monterey having the only home run in the game. It was great fun for both teams, and the plan is to have a home-and-home series beginning next season.

We are always in need of new players, so please join us if you're in need of a great outdoor fun activity. We begin play in April when the field dries out and continue having games into October.

— Michael Joutras

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Musings from Monterey:
Dissecting the Payroll Tax

Payroll taxes were created to ensure the solvency of the American social-safety net. Employees and employers each pay 1.45 percent on all income in order to support Medicare. However, the system that finances Social Security is more complex. Currently, there is a tax rate of 4.2% (a temporary stimulus reduction from 6.2%) for income earned by employees, and a 6.2% rate on income paid by employers. Both are capped at $106,800. Every dollar paid to an individual beyond that cap is tax-free for Social Security.

The result is a tax that is truly regressive; it favors the rich over the poor. Anyone earning up to $106,800 pays a payroll tax rate of 4.2% in addition to income taxes, sales taxes, and property taxes. However, someone earning $2 million per year is taxed at a total rate of just 0.2 percent! The more money someone earns per year, the lower the percentage of income he or she is expected to contribute. And, the more salary budgets are concentrated in a few people, the less a business has to contribute.

It is a perverse tax system—one that incentivizes CEO bonuses more than it does new hires. And, its regressive nature severely limits the revenues it can collect, endangering the long-term existence of Social Security. We wouldn't need to make any adjustments to the way Social Security works for approximately seventy-five years if we lifted the cap today. Compare that to the complex schemes of paring down benefits and restructuring the program that policymakers are currently proposing as short-term fixes. In the case of the payroll tax, is it worth preserving a status quo that hurts job growth and imperils entitlement programs that help millions of Americans? No.

In fact, we could even afford to lower the payroll tax rate, something conservatives likely desire, if we simply eliminated the tax cap. It's a win-win, nonpartisan solution, and Washington should get to work and make lifting the cap a major component of a comprehensive budgetary strategy.

— Jonah Carlson

Political Musings from Monterey, a column covering politics on the local, state, and national levels, can be found on www.politicalmusingsfrommonterey.com.

Monterey Makers Tour Dec. 3

Every winter, in the midst of holiday commotion, a day of serenity and quiet meandering occurs in Monterey. It's our **Monterey Makers Studio Tour**, on **Saturday, December 3**, 10 am–4 pm. The tour is an opportunity to see where and how beautiful things are being made by the artists and artisans of Monterey. It's your chance to meet our talented artists in their own workspace, to see what and how they produce, and possibly to locate the perfect and unique holiday gift for someone special in your life. The day of wandering through the studios you've been hoping to visit, may be the perfect gift to give yourself. Or, perhaps taking the Monterey Makers Tour will be your gift this year to honor our artists, and our Monterey community.

Here's how it works. Go to the sponsoring Monterey Cultural Council web site: www.MontereyMaCC.org. Follow the link on the left side of the web page to the Studio Tour. On the studio Tour page, you'll be able to download a map, showing all the workshops/studios that will be open for visits on Saturday, December 3, 10 am to 4 pm.

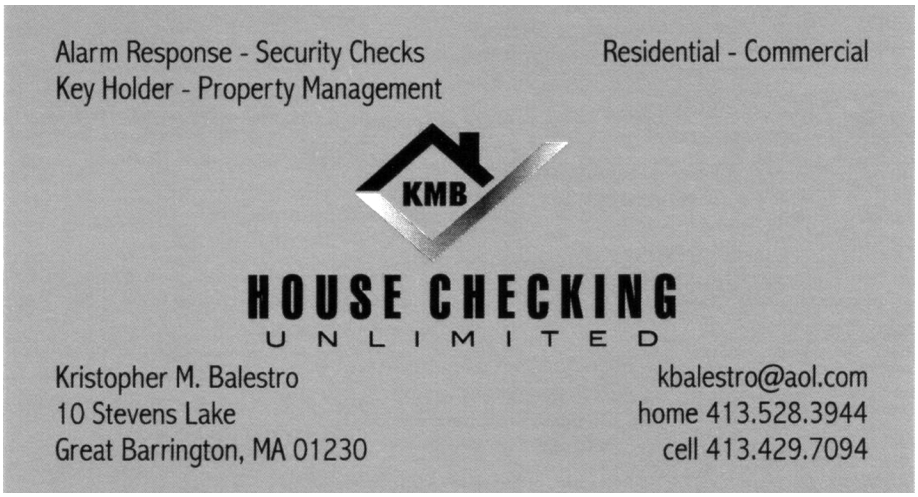
For more information about each of the artists and their studios, follow the link on the left side: **Meet the Makers**. There are quilters, potters, painters, media artists, fiber makers, and fiber artists. There are basket makers and local producers of wonderful things to put in the baskets. Pick the ones you want to see and map out your personal tour. Or start early and visit them all.

If web communication isn't your way of doing things, pick up a map for the Monterey Makers Studio Tour in the Knox Room of our Monterey Library or at Roadside Café. Both are on Main Road, Route 23, in Monterey.

The library has generously extended the hours its doors will be open on Saturday, December 3, so you can come in and get maps and information about the tour, from 9 am–3 pm. At Roadside Café studio tour maps will be available from 7:30 am to 2:30 pm, along with delicious coffee and edibles.

Celebrate Monterey. Come to the Monterey Makers Studio Tour.

— Pat Salomon



Calendar

Every Monday except holidays: Select Board meeting, Town Hall. Start time 6 pm (note new start time).

Every Tuesday: Zumba Class, 5:30–6:30 pm, Monterey Firehouse. $10/class.

Deer Hunting Season

Shotgun, November 28–December 10 (exc. Sunday). Primitive Firearms, December 12–31 (exc. Sundays).

Friday, December 2:

Opening reception for *Monterey Miniatures* exhibition in Knox Gallery at Monterey Library, 6–8 pm. Exhibition open December 2 through January 28 during Library hours. See p. 15.

Talk by policy analyst Barbara Honegger on the events of September 11, 2001, at the Pentagon and the accompanying anthrax attacks, 7 pm, South Berkshire Friends Meeting, 280 State Road (Route 23), Great Barrington. Free.

Saturday, December 3: Monterey Makers Studio Tour 10 am–4 pm. Over a dozen artists/makers will be opening their studios. See p. 22.

Tuesdays, Dec. 6, 13: Create your own holiday crafts with Mary Kate Jordan, 10–11:30 am, Monterey Library. Information: 413-528-5557.

Thursday, December 8: Free Blood Pressure Clinic with Berkshire Visiting Nurse Assoc., Town Hall Meeting Room, 2–3 pm.

Thursday, December 15: Public forum on Lake Buel flooding concerns with Sen. Downing, Rep. Pignatelli, and representative from MEMA and New Marlborough, 4 pm, Town Hall.

Monday, December 19: Adult book group will discuss *The Lost World of the Kalahari* by Laurens van der Post, 7:30 pm, Monterey Library.

Wednesday, December 21: Community Potluck Dinner, 6 pm, Monterey Meetinghouse Fellowship Hall. Mary Kate Jordan will present program on year-end festivals of light shared by all Western cultures. Free, everyone welcome. See p. 15.

Saturday, December 24:

Christmas Eve service, 7 pm, Monterey Church. Everyone welcome.

Library hours: 9:30 am–12:30 pm; no evening hours.

Monday, December 26: Town Offices, Library closed for Christmas.

Saturday, December 31: New Year's Eve. Library hours: 9:30 am–12:30 pm; no evening hours.

Monday, January 2, 2012: Town Offices, Library closed for New Year's.

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Monterey News

The *Monterey News* is an independent nonprofit corporation dedicated to fostering communication in the Monterey community. Our editorial address is P. O. Box 9, Monterey, MA, 01245. We invite signed letters, articles, drawings, poetry, and photographs. Submissions may also be left in the drop box on the loading dock of the General Store. Address requests for advertising rates and further information to the Editor, or telephone us at 413-528-4347 or e-mail montereynews9@gmail.com.

The Observer
October 26 – November 25

High temp. (11/9)	66°
Low temp. (10/31)	21°
Avg. high temp.	49.0°
Avg. low temp.	30.6°
Avg. temp.	39.8°
Total precipitation (on 12 days)	4.62 in.
Snowfall	29.1 in.

Contributors

We thank the following folks for their recent contributions.

Jeff Purvis
Bebe Bernstein
Shannon Amidon Castille
James Pearson, Jr.
Carol & Charles Smoler
Mattia Henley-Zwirz
Alyssa Gelbard
Robert & Lynne Horvath

Transfer Station Winter Hours

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Saturday	8 a.m.–1 p.m.

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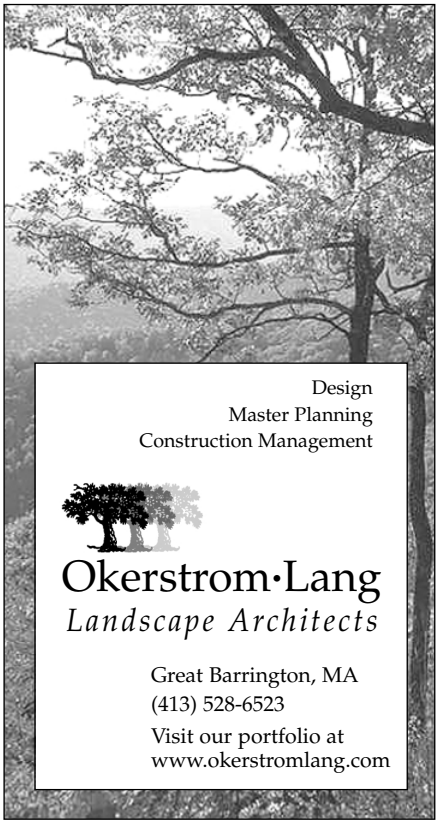

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Contributions from local and guest artists this month:
Pat Arnow, p. 13; Maureen Banner, p. 19;
George Emmons, p. 16; Bonner McAllester, p. 14.

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